

# New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

---

**Chair:** Peter Burling  
**Vice Chair:** Katherine Hersh

## Minutes

October 1, 2010

10:00 am

LOB 201

Present: Chair Peter Burling, Vice-Chair Kathy Hersh, Kerrie Diers, David Preece, Representative Allen, Mark Brewer, Mike Izbicki, Nancy Larson, Tim Moore, Steve Pesci, Robert Williams, Bruce Woodruff, Mike Pillsbury

- I. **Call to Order:** Chair Burling called the meeting to order at 10:00 am
- II. **Public Input:** Dawn Prieto from Merrimack NH commutes from Merrimack on Boston Express. The cost to ride is \$16/day and she feels that the reliability of timing is equal to that of a car trip. Ms. Prieto supports project from Manchester to Boston. As an interim measure, she would like to suggest transportation from Exit 8 to the Lowell station. She also noted that she had a hard time getting info about the NHRTA meetings. There was little contact information on the website and meeting time is held during the work day, which makes it difficult to attend. She feels that she is representing the 50-60 people behind her in line each day.

Chair Burling thanked Ms. Prieto for taking the time to come here today to express her thoughts. Kathy Hersh offered to add Ms. Prieto to the cc list of all NHRTA activities to get information directly. NHRTA recognizes and believes there is a huge demand for rail. Our meeting time is not convenient now, but we hope to change that once we have the funding to move forward. Getting people to sign support letters is the key to showing political support. Commuter connection to Lowell is key to interim solution.

- III. **Minutes:**

***David Preece made a motion to approve the minutes of August 27, 2010, seconded by Representative Allen. The minutes were approved unanimously.***

- IV. **Capitol Corridor Updates**

- a. **Status of grant application** – Mike Izbicki said the announcement will be made mid-late October but funds will not be available for 6 months after the award. We are not in a position to discuss moving forward; we can't move forward without any information on the planning grant.
- b. **Next Steps to secure FTA funds** – Kit Morgan talked to FTA. The guidance was to come back once we got the FTA grant so that we can develop a joint scope of work for both projects. Kit provided them with a draft task list of what we wanted to accomplish with FTA funds.

## New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

---

Mike Izbicki asked what additional steps we need to do once we get the grant. Do we need to go to fiscal committee? Chair Burling said that we should probably present to fiscal committee to let them know what we are doing. Kit Morgan said that since the FTA funds are in the budget we don't need to go to fiscal committee for that but we would need to for the FRA funds.

- c. **Amtrak Update** – Mike Izbicki stated that Amtrak asked for additional information and discussions are continuing.
- d. **Plaistow Project** – Tim Moore reported that 100 people attended last week's public information meeting. About 15 of those people were adamantly opposed to the project. There have been a lot of follow up emails and phone calls supportive of the project. The presentation to area Selectmen last night also went well.

Questions: What was the amount of CMAQ funds requested in the most recent application? Plaistow anticipates \$976,000 in 2019 in CMAQ; and is applying for \$7-8 million in CMAQ: \$3 million in rail cars. The application for the TIGER II grant will account for some of that. Without the rail cars there will be \$4 million requested in the CMAQ application.

Chair Burling asked if that would be an ongoing commitment from CMAQ? Tim Moore stated no. There are no exact figures, but there may be some small operating subsidy to support fare needed. If additional capacity needed, we would have to purchase a rail car. We anticipate making an application every other CMAQ round to purchase a car, but not anticipating an annual need for CMAQ funds.

Chair Burling asked about the status of repair for the rail bridge over the Merrimack River? Tim Moore stated that with moving the layover facility north of bridge, fewer crossings are needed. Mick Izbicki said that they are in the process of working on it and estimates another 5 years out for repairs.

Steve Pesci noted that the amount that Plaistow is seeking is in line with what has been requested historically from CMAQ funds.

David Preece suggested that since the next CMAQ committee will be meeting in October, it might be good to get someone in front of the committee to make a presentation.

Kathy Hersh suggested that we need to have a comprehensive planning effort for using CMAQ funds so that projects are not competing for the fund requests over the next 10 years. It might be good for leadership to decide which big picture projects should have priority for CMAQ funding distribution.

David Preece asked if there has been any word from the Downeaster regarding NH contribution to that service. Mike Pillsbury stated that they are looking at the Section 209 issues to support their share of costs. November is when they are supposed to establish a framework. States have put together negotiation team to negotiate with Amtrak. The main Amtrak issues are direct and shared costs (overhead); some large

## New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

---

states do not make contributions currently. Other issues are the capital costs of using the Amtrak equipment and right of way, how do we plan for increases coordinated with state budgets, and other issues.

David Preece asked if we have a sense of what the NH share will be. Mike Pillsbury stated not at this time. The ridership increases in NH might offset subsidy costs. The Downeaster office is still trying to determine costs.

Kit Morgan stated that the State rail plan should address the need for an overall picture of timeframe and costs. This would provide an evaluation of strategies and funding. This analysis should be within a year

Mike Pillsbury noted that on the NH Capitol Corridor Project, Quebec designated a representative to work with the New England rail delegates. One of the priorities is to work on the line from Montreal to Boston.

Kathy Hersh suggested that the Regional Planning Commissions should prioritize the CMAQ requests and look at the state as a whole. We should also have a meeting with newly elected legislators to fill them in on what NHRTA is up to and what we hope to accomplish.

Tim Moore stated that with respect to the Plaistow Project, the NH DOT would own the land under the facility and lease to MBTA. DOT or NHRTA could contract with MBTA to run service. The statute provides authority for either entity to own the service. We need to look at the MOU and amend if necessary. The rolling stock will be owned by MBTA. RI buys the capital equipment for MBTA and we would have a similar arrangement.

Kit Morgan stated that in RI there is an agreement regarding the rolling stock. The MBTA may own equipment. These details would need to be worked out in the agreement. We would contract with MBTA to build facility and run the service. It is hard to anticipate what NHRTA would need to do to prepare. We are looking to the town to maintain station and run facility.

Steve Pesci stated that he hopes that the town or state will look at opportunity to generate revenue from park and ride. UNH has 2 CMAQ requests in now, and looking at long term, the bigger scale projects will probably have more cost benefit in air quality improvements. We need to ensure comprehensive approach through prioritization and let CMAQ committee know.

David Preece asked if we should we try to find some experts to come talk to us about how other states pay for passenger rail service? Kit Morgan said this would be addressed in the state rail plan.

# New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

---

## V. Other Discussion

- a. **Rail Plan** – Kit Morgan hopes to have a contract signed by Governor and Council in November. It has taken a little longer than expected, but the negotiations took time. We are allowing for most of next year to complete the plan and will post the scope of work on the website. It would be useful for everyone to review this and understand what the consultants will develop for us: a vision for the state for both passenger and freight rail.
- b. Tim Moore asked if we need to get legislative approval for the Plaistow Project. If we receive funding, can we file with the Senate mid-term? Should we make sure that we have a senator who is willing to do that? We should try to receive clarification from Legislature about what it is we need to do. TIGER II funds need to be obligated by 2012. Tim Moore wanted to ensure that we are not locked out of the Plaistow project. Chair Burling will follow up.
- c. Nancy Larson distributed proposed business cards and letterhead.

***Chair Burling made a motion to expend up to \$400 to print business cards, letterhead and envelopes; business cards should be 1000 each for the 5 officers. We should also print 500 blank member cards. This will be paid for out of unexpended funds in account. The motion was seconded by David Preece.***

Kathy Hersh will email proper titles to Nancy for printing.

Kit Morgan asked what should we do with the NHRTA mail and phone calls that come to the DOT. The mail should go to Peter Burling. Calls should be directed to Bureau and can be forwarded to Peter and Mike as appropriate.

VI. Non-public session - none

VII. Adjourn – 11:15 pm

**Next Meeting will be held on Friday, October 29, 2010.**